Press release

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Ireland and UK develop a real time weather observing network to improve safety at sea

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The Met. Office, the Marine Institute in Ireland, Met Éireann, and the Irish Department of Marine and Natural Resources will today (October 20, 2000) launch the Irish Marine Data Buoy Network designed to improve weather forecasts and increase safety at sea. The network will provide essential data for marine weather forecasts, shipping bulletins and gale and swell warnings. The first of five buoys, 'MI 1', will be deployed next week by the Irish Research Vessel, Celtic Voyager.

The concept is based on the successful K-series buoy network which is operated by The Met. Office who are providing the first two buoys that will be used to establish the Irish network. Dr. Jim Caughey, Technical Director, at The Met. Office said: "This is a very successful collaboration which will add significantly to the data available to forecasters in both Ireland and the UK. It has also forged strong links between the Irish and UK partners."

"'MI 1'will be located west of the Aran Islands, where some of the severest conditions the North Atlantic can produce have recently proven treacherous", said Mr Fahey, the Irish Minister for the Marine and Natural Resources at the launch. "Our aim is to maximise safety and minimise risk at sea. The data buoy will provide crucial observations of wind, wave and general weather conditions that will help us achieve this", he said.

The network will be further developed over the next few years, with the second buoy deployed east of Dublin in early 2001.

"These regular weather observations will further improve our forecasts, provide vital input to our weather prediction models, and increase our knowledge of our marine climate", said Declan Murphy, Director of Met Éireann.

The Marine Institute also launched a promotional campaign today "Oh Buoy - Watch Out!" It targets seafarers who will need to give the buoys, (height 6m x width 3m) a 500m berth. The campaign aims to raise awareness among national and international fishermen, shipowners, yachtsmen and naval vessels.

The project also includes a major R&D component. The Met. Office and the Marine Institute will work with Irish companies and international players to develop a new technologically advanced buoy next year. The newly designed and developed buoy will have the added capability to collect data such as seawater temperature, salinity and currents.

"The R &D element of this project allows Ireland to develop niche expertise in the acquisition of real-time oceanographic observations, and in the medium-term, build capacity in the design and manufacture of world class marine weather buoys", said Yvonne Shields, Director of Science Technology & Innovation, at the Marine Institute.

The Irish Marine Data Buoy Network is based on a recommendation of the Fishing Vessel Safety Review Group. The Met. Office has worked closely with the Marine Institute, Met Éireann and the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources to successfully develop this initiative.

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